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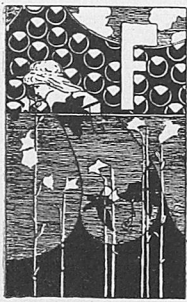
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GUIDE TO THE STYLES.—I.

THE LOUIS XV. STYLE.



FROM the days of the Regency the movement of architecture toward the refinement of private ease had become manifest. There never were so many mansions built in Paris, while swarms of quaint little structures in a gay and whimsical style sprang into existence in the environs of the capital. The decoration of this style is capriciously lively. Furniture becomes disintegrated, as it were, into many little articles of delicate workmanship. Every nook is a retreat for some piece of bric-à-brac. The wardrobe, the chest of drawers, become reduced in scale. The standing clock is diminished to a dial. Gay colors and gay forms seem to constitute two dominant notes in this style.

The general influence of François Boucher, in the arts; that of the architects Boffrand, Briseux, and Blondel; the engravings of Just-Aurèle Meissonnier; of Delajoue, of Babel; the models of the celebrated goldsmith Pierre Germain; the Chinese caprices of the decorator Jean Pillement, all contributed to emphasize the peculiar tone of the style Louis XV. in the course of its evolution.

Sundry phases deserve noting in the progress of this movement. After the cross-bow outlines came the bulging or convex forms, then the "chantourné" mouldings of more or less complex profiles, led along fanciful lines and merged into the other decorative details; then at last the rocaille, which became exaggerated so far as to bring about the reaction which took place under the auspices of Mme. de Pompadour and the painter Vien. The style Louis XVI. was the offspring of this reaction.

The "chantourné" is the chief characteristic of the style Louis XV., in which this feature is made use of and elaborated even to contortion. It is a preciousness of elegance which seems to deliberately aim at puzzling the beholder.

The absence of symmetry, the impossibility of discovering two mutually echoing elements in the composi-

tion, is characteristic of the designs. Any attempt at tracing a medial line through one of them would be thwarted by some decorative member intersecting it regardless of any rule of balance. At the top of the mirrors, which at this period had grown into very general use, there is always some one-sided decorative motive which prevents perfect symmetry. This affectation of obliquity asserts itself even in the hatchments and cartouches, which are always inclined. The general contours are never rectangular, but are always composed of serpentine curves resembling the letter "S." The outer lines of backs of seats or other pieces of furniture admitting such a treatment, the handles of the knives, forks and spoons, are compressed near the middle of the design and suggest the form of a violin.

Gilt wood, Chinese lacquers and their imitations by means of the varnish to which Robert Martin gave his name, are the preferred materials. Bronze mountings,

set in the panels, and cut out in highly elaborated patterns, decorate the cabinets of Caffieri. The marquetry work of Boulle, made to conform with the prevailing style, is continued by the heirs of the celebrated workman.

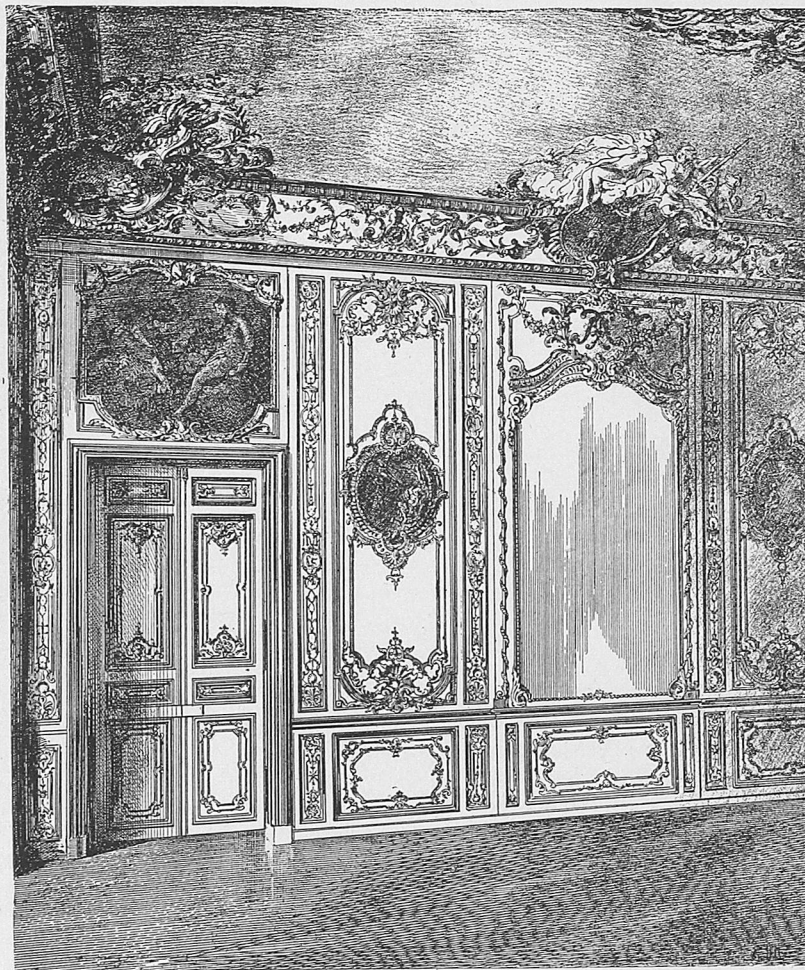
The ornamentation that is peculiar to the style Louis XV. modifies the old elements and introduces new ones. A narrow but very much lengthened acanthus takes the place of the rich and broad acanthus of the Louis XIV.

This new form becomes associated with shells, rocaille, perforated stones. The development of the natural sciences, interest in which is manifested by the gathering of collections of shells, etc., has a share, together with the popularity of Dresden china, in bringing about the triumph of the style rocaille.

An interior of the style Louis XV. also includes the decorative Chinese fancies,

the carved elephants of Caffieri's clocks; then the characters of Italian comedy, reminiscences of Watteau, and the little love sports met with pretty much everywhere, in tapestry, ceramic jewelry, snuff-boxes, bonbonnières, fans, transom panels, screens, and the many quaint and curious fancies peculiar to that era.

The illustration shown herewith is an excellent and absolute example of this interesting era, being a careful reproduction of the reception-room of one of the famous palaces in Paris, of this period, and shows to good advantage all the dainty eccentricities of the mode from which sprang the ever-popular Louis XVI. styles.



A LOUIS XV. INTERIOR. SHOWING CHARACTERISTIC DECORATION OF THAT EPOCH.